

# Washington State Patrol Media Advisory

*Chief John R. Batiste*

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## Office of the State Fire Marshal *Michael G. Matlick, State Fire Marshal*

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**Date:** October 26, 2006  
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### State Fire Marshal Reminds Residents to “Change Your Clock, Change Your Batteries.”

Olympia – As the time change approaches on Sunday, October 29, State Fire Marshal Mike Matlick wants to remind residents to make another change that could save their lives – changing the batteries in their smoke alarms.

Communities across the state witness tragic home fire deaths each year. In Washington State, 70 percent of these fire deaths occur in homes without working smoke alarms. Non-working smoke alarms rob residents of the protective benefits home fire safety devices were designed to provide. The mostly commonly cited cause of non-working smoke alarms: worn or missing batteries.

Changing smoke alarm batteries at least once a year is one of the simplest, most effective ways to reduce these tragic deaths and injuries. In fact, working smoke alarms nearly cut in half the risk of dying in a home fire. Additionally, the International Association of Fire Chiefs recommends replacing your smoke alarms every ten years.

To save lives and prevent needless injuries in Washington State, the Office of the State Fire Marshal has joined forces with Energizer and the International Association of Fire Chiefs for the 19<sup>th</sup> year of the *Change Your Clock, Change Your Battery* campaign. The program urges all citizens to adopt a simple, lifesaving habit: changing smoke alarm batteries when changing clocks back to standard time each fall, this year on October 29.

“The peak time for home fire fatalities is between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. when most families are sleeping,” reports State Fire Marshal Mike Matlick. “Smoke alarm maintenance is a simple, effective way to reduce home fire deaths. Children and senior citizens are at the highest risk, and a working smoke alarm can give them the extra seconds they need to get out safely.”

In addition, Matlick recommends residents use the “extra” hour they save from the time change to test smoke alarms by pushing the test button, planning “two ways out” and practicing escape routes with the entire family. Families should also prepare a fire safety kit that includes working flashlights and fresh batteries.

Tragically, fire can kill selectively. Those at the highest risk include:

- **Children** – Children under age five are at twice the risk of dying in a home fire. Eighty percent of fatal home fire victims were children in homes without working smoke alarms.

- **Seniors** – Adults over age 75 are three times more likely to die in home fires than the rest of the population; those over 85 are 4.5 times more likely to die in home fire. Many seniors are unable to escape quickly.
- **Low-Income Households** – Many low-income families are unable to afford batteries for their smoke alarms. These same households often rely on poorly installed, maintained or misused portable or area heating equipment – a main cause of fatal home fires.

For more information about fire safety, call your local fire department or you may visit our web page at [www.wsp.wa.gov](http://www.wsp.wa.gov) and then click on State Fire Marshal.

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